

Empowering Women- Vandana Shiva

- Vandana Shiva is an Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and anti-globalization author. Shiva, currently based in Delhi, has authored more than twenty books.



- In the essay “Empowering Women” she talks about the impact of reduction in the participation of women in agricultural and economic activities.
- She takes the case of Punjabi women and says that the state is the “bread basket” of India and the foci of the green revolution, yet the farmers commit suicide as they are debt- ridden without the means to repay it.
- The loss of biodiversity, with the major shift in agricultural pattern delimiting the crops to wheat and rice, and the immense percolation of the chemical pesticides and fertilizers into the agricultural cycle has led to desertification, barrenness of land and poverty for the farmers.
- According to Shiva, the women have been most hit as their reduced participation in the agricultural activities has also added to their reduced status in society and devaluation. Consequently, the sex ratio has been immensely disbalanced due to increasing number of female feticides. The women have now become an economic burden as they no longer are able to lend a helping hand in the farming. Shiva laments the loss of the ancient agricultural systems which were more women centric and profitable because,

“Food systems evolved by women, based on biodiversity- based production rather than chemical based production produce hundreds of times more food, with better nutrition, quality and taste.”

- She makes a strong case to adopt women friendly alternatives to farming rather than the ones suggested by government bodies, as women have the capacity to eradicate hunger completely.
- According to her the reasons for the growing poverty and starvation are, “High cost, low output, low return agriculture” as practiced by farmers these days. Women alone have the capacity to minimize waste and increase growth and income by incorporating eco-friendly preservatives and manure rather than artificially engineered chemicals.
- This essay is an excellent example of eco- feminist theory- "**Ecofeminism** is a movement that sees a connection between the exploitation and degradation of the natural world and the subordination and oppression of women. It emerged in the mid-1970s alongside second-wave feminism and the green movement.”
(www.wloe.org/what-is-ecofeminism.76.0.html)